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Subject: [West Slope] Silverton mentality undermines success

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Silverton mentality undermines success

More well done coverage on the heavy-metal loading of our Animas River (Herald, Aug. 4). It is hard to get people excited about a problem that silently grows a few gallons at a time, but thanks for the straight talk.

The scale of this problem requires the deepest of pockets to solve. The EPA and the Superfund approach is the only way this gets done. I was once told that after the decision to start was made, it would be three years before a shovel met the ground and another three years until anything began to change. Yet we fritter away time. The EPA likes community support. That harmony is corrupted at the source of the problem: the town of Silverton.

The corrective action is water capture, treatment and release, performed around the site of the Gladstone mine – a dead-end road. This is science, infrastructure and process in one primary location. As was mentioned, Silverton is worried about the tourist dollar. What do tourists think about a town and the mentality that regularly chooses to ignore the solution to this problem and then declare rugged independence, sending the unimpeded brew of heavy metals downstream, now nearly at Durango's doorstep.

This is a town that browbeat a startup sled manufacturing business to the point that it left town. Later, Silverton badgered a startup rum distillery to the point it moved part of the business to Crested Butte. Success is not exactly supported there.

The story mentioned that "mining's return is critical to the survival of Silverton." Building a town's future today, on what we know to be a Third World extraction economy basis is a nonstarter. Colorado has passed laws that make clean mining difficult, while still making money. We hear the phrase "rare-earth minerals" and Silverton's potential role. The phrase is a misnomer. These minerals are not rare, they are pretty well distributed around the world. The largest producers of same are those countries that will do it the cheapest – meaning dirtiest. Not again, Silverton. Laws have been passed!

Gaylord Lion

Durango

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